

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 2, 4-5, 7-9, and 21-32 are presently active in this case, Claim 1 canceled, and Claims 2, 4-9, 21, 24 and 27 amended by way of the present amendment.

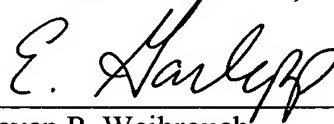
In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1 and 3-7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,316,167 to Angelopoulos in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,114,529 to Masuyama; and Claims 2, 8, 9 and 21-32 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

First, Applicants wish to thank Examiner Duda for the indication of allowable subject matter in Claims 2, 8, 9 and 21-32. In order to expedite issuance of a patent in this case, Applicants have amended allowable Claim 21 to include the limitations of base Claim 1 and intervening Claim 4, have amended allowable Claim 24 to include the limitations of base Claim 1 and intervening Claim 5, and have amended Claim 27 to include the limitations of base Claim 1. Therefore, Claims 21, 24 and 27 are now in condition for allowance. Rejected Claim 1 has been canceled. As Claims 21, 24 and 27 are now in condition for allowance, claims depending therefrom are also in condition for allowance. In this regard, Applicants have amended Claims 2, 4-6 and 7-9 to depend from allowable Claim 27.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action is therefore respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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